

June 11, 2010

**PHILADELPHIA, PA** — Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) joined the Filipino Executive Council of Greater Philadelphia, an umbrella organization for 25 area groups which works to unite its member groups to work together towards improving the Filipino community, as the keynote speaker at their Annual Independence Dinner Ball.

The Congressman praised the work of the Filipino Executive Council of Greater Philadelphia, under the leadership of President Dr. Rommel Rivera, to unite their community and to promote their culture in the larger community.

“The distinguishing characteristic of our American society is the combination of our diversity and

commonality,” said Congressman Sestak. “Understanding and respecting the cultures of those born to different heritage allows us to view our world from a broader perspective and affords us a deeper appreciation of our own heritage. I commend your commitment to preserving, enriching, and promoting the unique culture and traditions of the Philippines.”

Congressman Sestak, a member of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, discussed his support for the Filipino Veterans Equity Act which he voted for when it first passed the House of Representatives in 2008 and again in 2009 when it was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The bill established a ‘Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund’ which was used to make a one-time payment of \$15,000 for eligible Filipino Veterans who are citizens of the United States, and \$9,000 for those Veterans who are not US citizens. An eligible person is any person who served before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States, including organized guerrilla forces under commanders appointed, designated, or subsequently recognized by the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, or other competent authority in the Army of the United States; or in the Philippine Scouts.

“Compensation for Filipino World War II veterans was a top priority for the members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus,” said Congressman Sestak. “Finally, with the inclusion of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act in the Stimulus Bill, we began to honor our commitment to these brave soldiers who have given so much to our country and show our appreciation for the great sacrifices they and their fallen comrades made over 60 years ago.”

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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